**Part C: School Environmental Analysis**

*The candidate will be a participant observer in the selected school with a deliberate purpose of gathering qualitative data by observations and interviews of existing staff. The candidate will describe the school setting, the community setting, school environment, student achievement, student and staff cultural diversity, including exceptionalities, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, and other differences that may exist in the school and community. (Second of three analyses contributing to the CAAP).*

***And***

**Part D: Cultural Competence Audit**

*The candidate will measure the level of cultural competence at a school by assessing the school vision, mission, school leadership, teacher quality as measured by experience and certifications, teaching and learning, parental involvement and support, conflict resolution, and student achievement. (Third of three analyses that contribute to the CAAP). The audit should contain a list of recommendations that include specific activities and programs designed to present an action plan that will improve the culture of the school.*

***\*As per an August 10, 2011 meeting with Dr. Eury, the School Environmental Analysis and Cultural Competence Audit have been combined to reflect the interconnectedness of these two analyses.***

Winding Springs Elementary (WSE) is a Pre-K through fifth grade elementary school located in the Charlotte Mecklenburg School district. The school has operated from its inception through the 2010-2011 school year as a county-wide magnet program focused on the theme of leadership and global economics. The 2010-2011 WSE school community was comprised of approximately 780 students with the following demographics: 58.7% African-American, 26% Hispanic, 6.9% Multi-racial, 5.2% Caucasian, 2.9% Asian, and .3% American Indian. The students were distributed through eight Pre-K classrooms and 28 K-5 classrooms. Assignment of staff was based upon the CMS formula for weighted free and reduced lunch population. Class ratios were 1:22 for grades K through 3, and 1:28.5 for grades 4 and 5. WSE’s free and reduced lunch population was 63.3%. Students with Limited English Proficiency accounted for 16.2% of the population, while students with disabilities accounted for 10.8%. WSE had a gifted student population of 1.2%.

A three year trend analysis of WSE’s student achievement data shows mixed results. While WSE students are at or slightly above the 2009-2010 state average of 81.8% in math, there is a significant gap between WSE’s reading performance and the 2009-2010 state average of 70.1%. In addition, WSE has shown little growth in reading, maintaining a three year average slightly over 54%. Given the approximately 30% difference between reading and math scores, WSE needs to engage in serious reflection and dialogue regarding instruction, as math scores make it evident that students are capable of achieving.

In addition to the disparity between reading and math scores, WSE’s sub-group scores show significant differences in performance for Students with Disabilities (SWD) and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students, as compared to the total school population. While the proficiency level in reading for LEP students rose slightly, from 28.3% in 2009-2010 to 34.6% in 2010-2011, there is still a difference of 20 points between LEP students and the overall student achievement in reading. However, the difference in LEP scores and school-wide scores in math in 2010-2011 was only 11 points. Reading data for SWD is even more alarming. For all three school years, the SWD sub-group showed less than 30% proficiency in reading – almost 25 points less than the overall school population. While math proficiency scores for SWD are higher than reading scores, the gap between this particular sub-group and the overall school population remains around 25 points.

A review of Winding Springs Elementary’s most recent North Carolina Department of Public Instruction Teacher Quality data indicated that WSE employed 42 teachers. Of the 42 teachers, 2% were lateral entry teachers and WSE employed no teachers with emergency/provisional licenses. 100% of teachers were considered highly qualified as defined by federal law. 29% of teachers at WSE held advanced degrees, with five teachers holding National Board certification. The teacher turnover rate was 4%, well below the district and state average of 11%. In terms of years of teaching experience, 21% of teachers were in their first three years, with 48% having taught between four and ten years, and 31% with ten or more years of teaching experience.

However, WSE’s three year trend in teacher effectiveness data does not reflect that 79% of its teachers are experienced. In fact, WSE’s third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers fell at the 37th percentile in math in 2010-2011 as compared to their district peers and the value-added data for reading is significantly worse. For the 2010-2011 school year, WSE teachers were ranked among the lowest in the district – with a measure in the 1st percentile. The data also shows that WSE’s teachers have not been able to increase student achievement by “adding” instructional days for students above the 180 instructional day baseline. In fact, both areas of the value-added measures indicate that WSE actually “subtracts” days of instruction from students, with reading value-added days slightly lower than math value-added days.

The demographics of WSE’s teaching staff is not representative of the student population. Of the 42 certified teachers, 26 are white females, 6 are African American females, 1 is Asian female, and there are 2 Hispanic females. WSE has 8 male teachers, 7 of whom are white and 1 of Middle Eastern descent. Administration is represented by 2 white females and 1 African American female. However, the overall lack of diversity has not had a negative impact on staff embracing the cultural diversity of the school. Because the school has operated for many years as a global magnet, the school embodies an approach that celebrates students’ cultural heritage. Although the school has transitioned to a neighborhood school for the 2011-2012 school year, an emphasis on global education and respect for individuals is very much a part of the school atmosphere.

WSE’s mission is encompassed in the school’s motto of Service, Responsibility, and Leadership. Students are expected to be active participants in their achievement of the essential academic, interpersonal, and leadership qualities to contribute as effective and successful citizens in an ever-changing society. According to the school handbook, WSE characterizes itself as a CAN DO team of students, staff, and families. Based on the school mission, WSE has articulated a set of beliefs to serve as the foundation for maximizing student achievement within the school and in partnership with the community. These beliefs are as follows:

1. WSE believes that all staff holds high expectations for student achievement and growth.
2. WSE believes all students can and will learn, with effective interventions and implementation of best instructional practices.
3. WSE believes we exist to serve.
4. All staff decisions will be based upon what is best for each child.
5. Quality work and behaviors are expected of the entire school family.
6. The WSE community will develop an awareness, understanding, and appreciation for diverse cultures.
7. WSE will intentionally teach leadership skills, the value of service, cooperation, care, and respect for one another.
8. WSE believes in the development of strong community involvement and support.

In analyzing WSE’s faculty and staff commitment statements, the school exhibits significant strengths in #’s 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, and 7. WSE has long been noted in the surrounding community as a school that holds high expectations for students in terms of developing leadership skills. Students dress in uniform and the school supports a strong student Leadership Team. The impact of the global magnet theme has resulted in an explicit focus on teaching and involving parents and students in exploring diverse cultures through project fairs and a yearly International Celebration. As supported by the TWCS data and CMS district parent surveys, these commitment statements do provide the strong foundational support of the school’s culture. However, WSE has continued to struggle with #’s 3 and 8 – both statements that revolve around the strong involvement of community members outside the school. WSE has a strong focus on students, but has not consistently utilized the opportunities offered by families and businesses with connections to the school. The 2011-2012 School Improvement Plan, involvement of a Title I Family Advocate, and the school’s concentrated efforts on establishing a collaborative culture for the new WSE neighborhood school will contribute significantly to improving WSE’s actions as related to these commitment statements. The following feedback was provided by two staff members after the initial staff meeting of August 18, 2011 and indicates WSE is making progress in establishing a true school-wide learning community.

Penny,

Thank you so much for planning a great 1st day! The information presented via the staff handbook was organized and thorough; however, it was not "overkill" for the veteran staff members. The "getting to know you" activity was also terrific, but my favorite part was the "Style Inventory". It was great to see who had the same working style as me and to read the descriptions of the other working styles. I think this information is imperative in building strong teams that have a variety of members with different strengths.

Overall, the positive atmosphere of the meeting will have an undeniable influence on how the school year starts and how we learn to work together.

Thanks again! You are great!

Paula Williams

EC Teacher

Winding Springs Elementary

Hi Penny-

I wanted to let you know the staff activity you lead Thursday morning (DISC), was engaging, fun, and very helpful. I know we are excited about the new start to the school year, and with a large staff there is always a mix of personality types. The activity gave us insight on how to work effectively with our fellow co-workers. I definitely feel better equipped with how to have a productive and enjoyable school year with our teachers and staff. Thank you for taking the time to organize this activity!

LeAnn Casilio

3rd Grade Classroom Teacher

Winding Springs Elementary

(980)-343-5140

In summary, WSE’s commitment to the establishment of a new school culture indicates that it is poised to accept, celebrate, and utilize the strengths of the school community in order to positively impact the lives of its students.